

Assembly Joint Resolution

No. 2

Introduced by Assembly Members Portantino and Achadjian
(Principal coauthors: Assembly Members Gatto and Halderman)
(Principal coauthors: Senators Berryhill, De León, Liu, Simitian,
Wyland, and Yee)

January 25, 2011

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 2—Relative to the Armenian Genocide.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL’S DIGEST

AJR 2, as introduced, Portantino. Armenian Genocide: Day of Remembrance.

This measure would designate April 24, 2011, as “California Day of Remembrance for the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923.” It would memorialize the Congress and the President of the United States to act likewise to commemorate the Armenian Genocide.

Fiscal committee: no.

1 WHEREAS, The Armenian people, living in their 3,000-year
2 historic homeland in eastern Asia Minor and throughout the
3 Ottoman Empire, were subjected to severe persecution and brutal
4 injustice by the rulers of the Ottoman Empire before and after the
5 turn of the 20th century, including widespread massacres,
6 usurpation of land and property, and acts of wanton destruction
7 during the period from 1894 to 1896, inclusive, and again in 1909;
8 and
9 WHEREAS, The horrible experience of the Armenians at the
10 hands of their oppressors culminated in 1915 in what is known by

1 historians as the “First Genocide of the Twentieth Century,” and
2 as the prototype of modern day mass killing; and

3 WHEREAS, The Armenian Genocide began with the arrest,
4 exile, and murder of hundreds of Armenian intellectuals, including
5 business, political, and religious leaders, starting on April 24, 1915;
6 and

7 WHEREAS, The regime then in control of the empire, known
8 as the “Young Turks,” planned and executed the unspeakable
9 atrocities committed against the Armenian people from 1915 to
10 1923, inclusive, which included the torture, starvation, and murder
11 of 1,500,000 Armenians, death marches into the Syrian Desert,
12 the forced exile of more than 500,000 innocent people, and the
13 loss of the traditional Armenian homelands; and

14 WHEREAS, While there were some Turks and others who
15 jeopardized their safety in order to protect Armenians from the
16 crimes being perpetrated by the Young Turk regime, the genocide
17 of the Armenian people constituted one of the most egregious
18 violations of human rights in the history of the world; and

19 WHEREAS, The United States Ambassador to the Ottoman
20 Empire, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., stated “Whatever crimes the most
21 perverted instincts of the human mind can devise, and whatever
22 refinements of persecutions and injustice the most debased
23 imagination can conceive, became the daily misfortunes of this
24 devoted people. I am confident that the whole history of the human
25 race contains no such horrible episode as this. The great massacres
26 and persecutions of the past seem almost insignificant when
27 compared to the sufferings of the Armenian race in 1915. The
28 killing of the Armenian people was accompanied by the systematic
29 destruction of churches, schools, libraries, treasures of art, and
30 cultural monuments in an attempt to eliminate all traces of a noble
31 civilization with a history of more than 3,000 years”; and

32 WHEREAS, In discussing World War I, President Theodore
33 Roosevelt wrote that “... the Armenian massacre was the greatest
34 crime of the war, and the failure to act against Turkey is to condone
35 it ... the failure to deal radically with the Turkish horror means that
36 all talk of guaranteeing the future peace of the world is mischievous
37 nonsense”; and

38 WHEREAS, Winston Churchill wrote: “As for Turkish
39 atrocities: ... massacring uncounted thousands of helpless
40 Armenians, men, women, and children together, whole districts

1 blotted out in one administrative holocaust—these were beyond
2 human redress”; and

3 WHEREAS, Contemporary newspapers like the New York
4 Times commonly carried headlines such as “Tales of Armenian
5 Horrors Confirmed,” “Million Armenians Killed or in Exile,” and
6 “Wholesale Massacre of Armenians by Turks”; and

7 WHEREAS, Adolph Hitler, in persuading his army commanders
8 on the eve of World War II that the merciless persecution and
9 killing of Poles, Jews, and other peoples would bring no retribution,
10 declared, “Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the
11 Armenians?”; and

12 WHEREAS, Raphael Lemkin, the attorney who coined the word
13 “genocide” in 1948 and who was instrumental in the establishment
14 of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and
15 Punishment of Genocide, cited the Armenian Genocide as a clear
16 example of genocide; and

17 WHEREAS, The United States, through its filing with the
18 International Court of Justice in 1951 pertaining to the United
19 Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the crime
20 of Genocide expressly noted that “outstanding examples on the
21 crime of genocide” included the “Turkish massacres of
22 Armenians”; and

23 WHEREAS, The United States, in a letter from Assistant
24 Secretary, Legislative Affairs, Matthew A. Reynolds to the
25 Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, dated July
26 29, 2008, acknowledged and reaffirmed the historical record of
27 the Armenian Genocide by stating, the “Administration recognizes
28 that the mass killings, ethnic cleansing, and forced deportations
29 of over one and a half million Armenians were conducted by the
30 Ottoman Empire”; and

31 WHEREAS, Unlike other peoples and governments that have
32 admitted and denounced the abuses and crimes of predecessor
33 regimes, and despite the overwhelming proof of genocidal intent,
34 the Republic of Turkey has inexplicably and adamantly denied the
35 occurrence of the crimes against humanity committed by the Young
36 Turk rulers, and those denials compound the grief of the few
37 remaining survivors of the atrocities, desecrate the memory of the
38 victims, and cause continuing trauma and pain to the descendants
39 of the victims; and

1 WHEREAS, The Turkish Government has engaged in concerted
2 efforts to revise history through the dissemination of propaganda
3 falsely suggesting that Armenians were responsible for their fate
4 in the period from 1915 to 1923, inclusive, and by the funding of
5 programs at American educational institutions for the purpose of
6 furthering the cause of this revisionism; and

7 WHEREAS, The Republic of Turkey has been condemned by
8 Amnesty International and other human rights organizations for
9 making free speech a crime by enacting Article 301 of the Turkish
10 Penal Code, which makes “public denigration of Turkishness ...
11 the Government of the Republic of Turkey, the judicial institutions
12 of the State, the military or security structures” punishable by
13 imprisonment, and has used this device to harass, intimidate,
14 prosecute, and imprison Turkish citizens who have written or
15 spoken honestly about the Armenian Genocide, including Nobel
16 Prize winning author Orhan Pamuk; and

17 WHEREAS, Among those charged with “denigration of
18 Turkishness” by Turkish prosecutors for his forthright
19 acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide was journalist Hrant
20 Dink, and in this atmosphere of intolerance of dissent, Mr. Dink
21 was assassinated for his views on January 19, 2007; and

22 WHEREAS, The accelerated level and scope of denial and
23 revisionism, coupled with the passage of time and the fact that few
24 survivors remain who serve as personal eyewitnesses to the
25 indescribable brutality and torment, compel a sense of urgency in
26 achieving formal recognition and reaffirmation of the historical
27 truth of the Armenian Genocide; and

28 WHEREAS, By honoring the victims and survivors, and
29 consistently remembering and forcefully condemning the atrocities
30 committed against the Armenian people as well as the persecution
31 of the Assyrian and Greek populations of the Ottoman Empire, we
32 guard against repetition of the crime of genocide; and

33 WHEREAS, California has become home to the largest
34 population of Armenians in the world outside of Armenia,
35 including Armenian Genocide survivors and their descendants,
36 and those citizens have enriched our state and our Nation through
37 leadership in academia, medicine, business, law, agriculture,
38 government, the arts, and many other worthy endeavors, and they
39 are proud and patriotic practitioners of American citizenship; and

1 WHEREAS, The State of California has been at the forefront
2 of encouraging and promoting a curriculum relating to human
3 rights and genocide in order to empower future generations to
4 prevent recurrence of the crime of genocide; now, therefore, be it

5 *Resolved by the Assembly and Senate of the State of California,*
6 *jointly,* That the Legislature of the State of California hereby
7 designates April 24, 2011, as the “California Day of Remembrance
8 for the Armenian Genocide of 1915–1923”; and be it further

9 *Resolved,* That the State of California commends its
10 conscientious educators who teach about human rights and
11 genocide; and be it further

12 *Resolved,* That the State of California respectfully memorializes
13 the Congress and the President of the United States to act likewise
14 and to formally recognize and reaffirm the historical truth that the
15 atrocities committed against the Armenian people constituted
16 genocide; and be it further

17 *Resolved,* That the State of California calls upon the Republic
18 of Turkey to acknowledge the facts of the Armenian Genocide and
19 to work toward a just resolution; and be it further

20 *Resolved,* That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
21 of this resolution to the President of the United States, Members
22 of the United States Congress, the Governor, and the Turkish
23 Ambassador to the United States.

24
25
26 **CORRECTIONS:**

27 **Heading—Authors—Lines 1, 2, and 3.**
28